DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 442 158 CS 510 347

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TITLE "Borrowed Black": A Labrador Fantasy from the Book by Ellen Bryan Obed, Adapted for Stage by Mermaid Theatre of Nova Scotia. Cue Sheet for Students.
INSTITUTION John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Washington, DC.
SPONS AGENCY Department of Education, Washington, DC.
PUB DATE 1998-00-00
NOTE 10p.
AVAILABLE FROM http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/cuesheet/theater.html.
PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom - Learner (051)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Acting; Class Activities; Cultural Activities; Elementary Secondary Education; Foreign Countries; Problem Solving; *Puppetry
IDENTIFIERS *Drama in Education; Labrador

ABSTRACT

This performance guide is designed for teachers to use with students before and after a performance of "Borrowed Black: A Labrador Fantasy," by the Mermaid Theatre of Nova Scotia. The guide, called a "Cuesheet," contains seven reproducible activity sheets for use in class, addressing: (1) The Story (orienting students to the characters and places of the story, and with a basic story outline); (2) Before Attending the Performance (on creating the characters, problems to solve, creating the character "Borrowed Black," creating a Borrowed Black puppet, and myths and legends about the moon); (3) After Attending the Performance (with activities such as interviewing characters and writing newspapers articles about them, and with questions to consider); and (4) Theater: A Collaborative Art (describing the audience's role in a performance). Resources for further exploration are listed. (SR)

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"Borrowed Black": A Labrador Fantasy from the Book by Ellen Bryan Obed, Adapted for Stage by Mermaid Theatre of Nova Scotia. Cue Sheet for Students.

by Victoria Brown

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Borrowed Black

A Labrador Fantasy
From the book by Ellen Bryan Obed
Adapted for stage by
Mermaid Theatre of Nova Scotia
Music by Steven Naylor
Director and puppet creator,
Jim Morrow

Cue sheet FOR STUDENTS

Welcome to Cuesheet, a performance guide published by the Education Department of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Washington, D.C. This *Cuesheet* is designed to be used before and after attending a performance of *Borrowed Black: A Labrador Fantasy*, by the Mermaid Theatre of Nova Scotia. This *Cuesheet* has information about the play and activities to share with classmates, friends, or family members.

This Cuesheet includes:

The Story, pages 2–3

Before Attending the Play, pages 4–5

After Attending the Play, pages 6–7

Theater: A Collaborative Art, page 8

Resources, page 8

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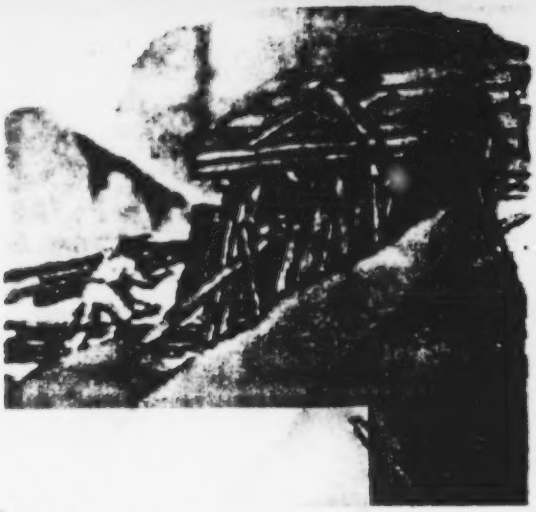
The Story

Borrowed Black is the main character in this play. To understand what happens to him, read and look at this story map. You will hear these words spoken in the play.

This story begins when...



Borrowed Black came to stay on the tall dark shore of the wildest tickle of Labrador.

He borrowed boards from boats and built a shack, caught two hundred creatures to hold it back.

About Labrador

Labrador is in the northeast corner of Canada. Try to find Labrador on a map of North America.

Labrador has the largest caribou herd in the world. Caribou are large American deer, related to the reindeer.

Many shipwrecks have been discovered off the coast of Labrador. Most of these ships are from 1550-1600 when Labrador was the world's largest whaling capital.

There are still many small fishing villages and towns along Labrador's coast.

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Rescue the moon!
Could the crew find a way?
To find out what happened,
you must see the play!

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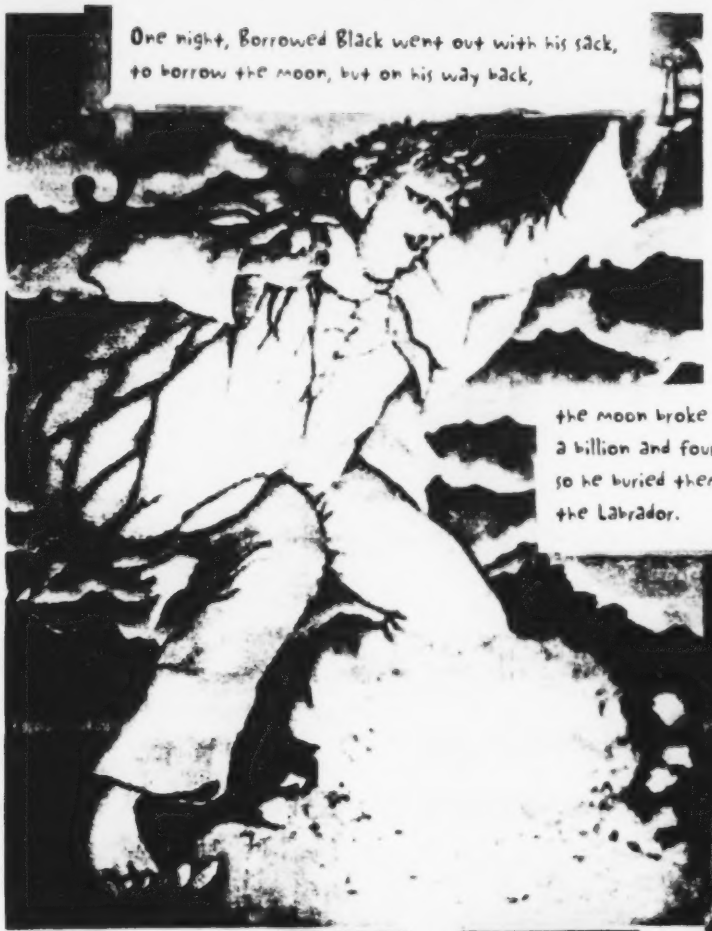
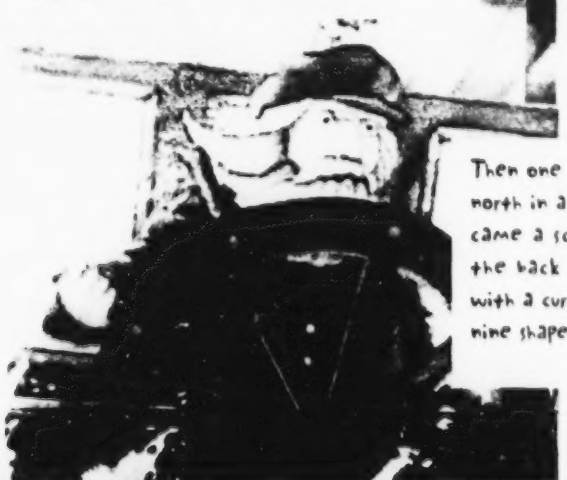

One night, Borrowed Black went out with his sack,
to borrow the moon, but on his way back,
the moon broke in pieces—
a billion and four,
so he buried them deep off
the Labrador.

gale—**a strong wind,** reaching up to 63 **miles per hour**

schooner—**a sailing vessel**


Then one night from the
north in a furious gale
came a schooner built from
the back of a whale—
with a curious crew of
nine shapes and sizes.

Use Your Imagination!

This story takes place on "the wildest tickle of Labrador." What do you think a "tickle" could be? Make up a definition! On your classroom map, point to where you think this wild tickle might be!

There are boat characters in the play. They are described as a "Curious Crew of nine shapes and sizes." Some of their names are: Mousie Mate, Stovepipe, Captain Dude, and Sculpin (a sculpin is any small, fresh-water fish having a large head). Try to think of other character names for a curious boat crew. Draw a picture of what you think these characters might look like.

This story map does not tell you how the story ends. Try to think up an ending for this story. How do you think the moon could be rescued?

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Before Attending the Play

The Mermaid Theatre of Nova Scotia developed an unusual theater production of *Borrowed Black* by combining actors, puppets, music, and special light and sound effects to create the fantasy world of *Borrowed Black*.

Creating the Characters

Borrowed Black has characters of all shapes and sizes. In the play, some of the characters are created by puppeteers who move large and small puppets; others are actors in costumes. Some animal characters are created by the actors using their hands to make the shape of the animal's body.

Try using your hands to make the shapes of the following animals:

A seal A wolf A jaeger

jaeger – a sea bird that chases weaker birds to make them drop their prey

You can also make the shadows of animal shapes with your hands: Put a light source (an overhead projector works well) behind a sheet that is hung like a screen. Put your hands between the light source and the sheet and create the shadows of animal shapes on the sheet.

Will the animals look bigger or smaller if you move your hand-shape closer to the light? Farther away from light? What other animal shapes can you make using your hands?

Problems to Solve

The story for *Borrowed Black* comes from a book. Some of the unusual things that happen in this story are shown with pictures in the book. Showing them on stage is harder!

Be a creative problem-solver. Can you think of ways to show the following things on stage?

- Borrowed Black captures the moon and plays with it.
- The moon breaks in pieces–a billion and four.
- A boat that has been built in the back of a whale appears.
- The boat carries a curious crew of nine sizes and shapes.

When you attend the play, watch for how these problems were solved.

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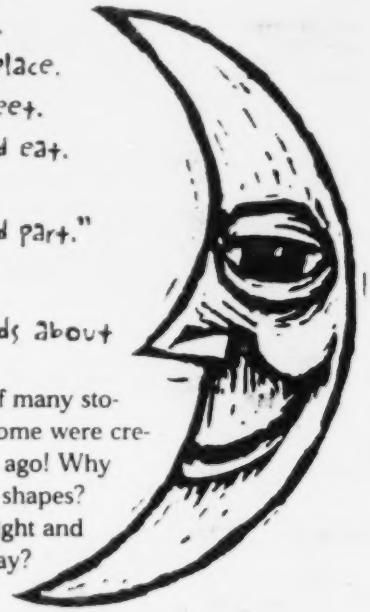
Creating Borrowed Black

Read this description of the character Borrowed Black.

All of Borrowed Black's parts were borrowed bits and pieces from nature. How do you think a character puppet or costume for this character might be created?

"He borrowed his hands from the paws of a bear.
Patch of brown seaweed he borrowed for hair.
His eyes were a wolf's. He borrowed the beak
of a gull for a nose.
He cut off the sails of a schooner for clothes.
Thin shells of goose eggs he had for his face.
His bones were dried driftwood shivered in place.
He walked on seal flippers: They were his feet.
He borrowed some whale's teeth so he could eat.
He had a borrowed wind for a heart
that held him together, each small borrowed part."



Create a Borrowed Black Stick Puppet

(You can do this activity at home or at school.)

Start with a cardboard tube (from paper towels or wrapping paper). This will be the center of your puppet.

Now, look all around, inside and outside, for objects that can be used to create the face and body parts of your Borrowed Black character puppet.

How many different things can you find? What is the most unusual object you found for your puppet?

Use glue, tape, or a stapler to attach the parts of your puppet. Leave enough space on the bottom of the tube. This is the part that you will hold onto with your hand.

When all of the pieces are on (and glue is dry), you have a puppet! Look at your puppet's face. What would be a good name for this puppet? Can you create a voice for your puppet? How many different ways can you make your puppet move?

Have your puppet talk with a friend's puppet.

Myths and Legends about the Moon

Borrowed Black is one of many stories about the moon. Some were created hundreds of years ago! Why does the moon change shapes? Why does it shine at night and disappear during the day? Where does it go? Is it hiding from the sun? Long before scientists uncovered its mysteries, storytellers created tales about the moon:

One tale from Vietnam describes the moon and sun as daughters of the Jade Emperor sent to oversee the earth. The moon once shone as brightly as her sun sister, but she had to put ashes on her face so the farmers could rest at night.

There is a Korean tale of a stubborn Fire Dog trying to retrieve the moon for his master. Each night, he takes a bite out of the moon, but as soon as he has his mouth full, the moon grows round again.

One Iroquois myth explains how day and night were made when Great Turtle, master of all animals, commanded the burrowing animals to make holes in the corners of the sky. This was so the sun and moon could go down through one and climb up again through the other.

Moon Mysteries

Re-read the questions about the moon at the top of this section. Can you make up a story that explains one of these moon mysteries?

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After Attending the Play

Interview the Characters for the Tickle Village Daily News

Imagine that you live in a small fishing village on "the tall dark shore of the wildest tickle of Labrador." You are a reporter for the *Tickle Village Daily News*. You have survived for 17 seasons with no moon to light the night sky. Finally, the moon is back, and your job is to interview some of the people involved, including Borrowed Black.

Role Playing. Working in pairs with classmates, pretend to be reporters who interview the characters. First, one partner pretends to be the reporter, and the other partner pretends to be one of the following characters:

Borrowed Black
Sculpin
Mousie Mate
Stovepipe
Captain of the boat "carved from the back of a whale"
Local fishermen (both men and women who fish for a living)

After a few minutes, switch roles (reporters become one of the story's characters; characters become reporters). Each time you switch, work with a new partner!

Reporters' Questions. Reporters may want to begin the interview by asking: Was the crew frightened? Did Borrowed Black feel sorry for his breaking the moon? Where will he go now?

What other questions could you ask each of these characters?

Write Newspaper Articles

After you have interviewed some of the characters, work with your classmates and prepare a special extra edition of the *Tickle Village Daily News*. Use information from your interviews to write news articles about the moon's return.

Put all the articles together to create a special edition of *Tickle Village Daily News*. You may want to draw newspaper "photographs" of the characters to include in your newspaper.

Questions to Consider

These lines are from *Borrowed Black*. They describe what happened when the moon was "destroyed."

"The air was thick and dark and chill.
And no one could tell where the sea met the hill.
Shivering rabbits waited for day.
Hungry owls sought, but couldn't find prey."

What other problems might happen if the moon really disappeared?

Why do you think a story about the moon's disappearance might be interesting to people who work around the sea?

Who was your favorite character in the play? Why? What was the funniest part of the play? The saddest?

Can you remember all of the characters (puppets) from the play? See if you can make a list of the characters without looking back at your Story Map!

Which characters (puppets) in this play were funny, scary, or likable? Which characters were the most interesting to you? Why?

How were light and music used to create different moods in this play? Do you think the lighting and music affected your feelings during the production? How?

Review the "Problems to Solve" section of this Cuesheet on page 4. How did the director and actors solve these problems? Were any of your ideas for solving these problems used in the production?

Here's a math problem: In the story, the moon disappears for 17 seasons. How many years would this be?

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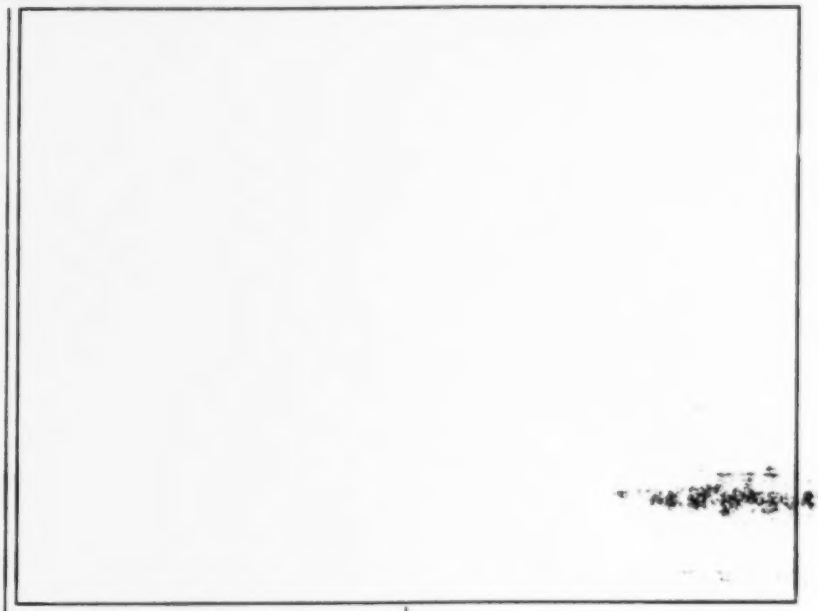
EXTRA! Tickle Village Daily News **EXTRA!**

Borrowed Black Returns Moon! Mousie Mate Becomes a Hero



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Theater is a Collaborative Art

Theater is always a collaborative art. This means that many artists work together: playwright; director; actors; costume, set, lighting, and sound designers; and the audience.

This collaboration usually starts with a playwright's idea. With that idea, the playwright creates characters and writes a script of the story–the play. The director's job is to take the written script and transfer the playwright's idea from the pages of that play onto the stage. The director works with the actors and all of the designers to "bring the play to life." It requires many hours of practice (rehearsal) and hard work to be successful.

The audience is also an important part of every play's performance. You and the actors and puppeteers are in the same room. This is different from watching actors on television or in the movies. Talking and making noise can disturb actors in the play and other audience members.

Here is how you can collaborate to make *Borrowed Black* an enjoyable experience for everyone: Listen and watch carefully. Laugh when something is funny. Clap when you enjoy something. Use your imagination to enter the world that has been created for you and with you.

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Cuesheet is funded in part through the support of the U.S. Department of Education, The Kennedy Center Corporate Fund, and The Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation.

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